



DAILY WORTH

*It's your life...Own it.*

# *Protect Your Online Rep*

By DailyWorth Team | March 05, 2013

Admit it, you Google yourself—and you should.

Other people are probably searching for you right this second—friends, potential employees, clients, partners—and it's wise to know what information is popping up.

But instead of searching for yourself occasionally, set up a Google Alert for your name. The service will email you if you pop up in anything new online.



If you have a high-profile job—something in the public eye or that invites online commentary—schedule alerts for once a day, says Shannon M. Wilkinson, founder and CEO of New York City-based Reputation Communications. For the rest of us, weekly is fine. You should do occasional searches on Facebook and Twitter, too.

Hopefully everything that surfaces will document your success. But it's a big, bad Internet out there.

You might find a nasty comment about something you wrote, a photo you wish had never been taken, a case of mistaken identity, and other hazards.

Worried? Want to take charge? Read Wilkinson's advice for handling unpleasant digital surprises.

## **If someone bashes you...**

Your first instinct might be to respond to someone who attacks you online, but “the best rule of thumb is not to react or to respond to anonymous commentary,” Wilkinson says. “When someone with a legitimate identity posts a negative comment, consider the setting. Is it a credible response to a presentation, article, or opinion you have provided in a public platform?”

If the author is legit, then responding with a short-neutral response might be appropriate. “But never respond in an emotional or defensive manner.”

If you’ve been targeted by someone who is just being mean, try to ignore it and move on.

## **If someone else has the same name...**

If you have a relatively common name (and even if you don’t), there may be someone out there with the same moniker and, er, lower standards of conduct. To distinguish yourself, create a strong online presence of your own that will appear high in Google searches, Wilkinson says. Remember that most people don’t go past the first page of results.

Create profiles on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and Google Plus, even if you have no intention of being active on them. “Adding your head shot will also help differentiate you from others,” she says. They will all rank highly in Google.

Buy the domain associated with your name—the .com version, .net, and everything else. You don’t have to do much with them; even a simple block of color with your name and a link to your LinkedIn profile works. If the domain for your name is already taken, add your middle initial.

## **If embarrassing content is out there...**

If it wasn’t posted by a friend, take all of the above steps to make sure positive stuff pops up first.

Then, continue to build your profile by posting high-quality content, like commentary, articles, white papers, YouTube videos and blog posts, Wilkinson advises.

Beyond that, remember that none of us can control the Internet. “Creating and maintaining a strong online presence will not only provide the information you want on the Internet—it will also provide a counterbalance for negative information, placing it in perspective,” Wilkinson says.